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A PRETTY TALE OF PAKISTAN

BY
N.V. THADANI

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1946

*O wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as ithers see us.*

Robert Burns

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A PRETTY TALE OF PAKISTAN

A pretty tale of Pakistan—
Shadow of a dream of dawn,
Seen by a Poet on the lawn
Of pleasant mount, by pleasant sea!

And he was in half serious mood,
And mused on all that gave him food
For thought—the motley multitude
Of strangest deeds of men that be
In tales of laughter and of tears,
Of love and hate, of hopes and fears,
Of youth and age, and passing years—
In a great people's history.

And this is what he sang or said,
In notes of mingled music made;
And now he paused, and now he played
On chords that echoed cheerily:

A pretty tale of Pakistan—
Gleam of a glory that is gone—
And thus the merry rhyme went on
From pleasant lawn to pleasant lea.

A PRETTY TALE OF PAKISTAN

I

THE FIRST SHOT

WHEN comets trail across the sky,
Great men are born—some day to die :
Portents of a mighty fate,
To raise a man or ruin a state !

Such, HANJI MANJI, was the hour
Thou wor'st a gown to rise to power—
To mount upon a pleasant throne—
A Moghul of the sea and lawns thou call'st
thy own.

He rises in his seat—behold
A great Assembly—wise and old !
The mighty tremble : Who so bold
But shrinks before his icy gaze !
He frowns, he speaks, and now doth raise
A little finger of his hand,
And lifts his head; his eyes expand;

And words of fire, defiance, scorn,
Leap up to wean, to win, to warn;
And bureaucrats, both white and brown,
Tremble before his slightest frown;
And wonder all his friends and foes
At what he says, at what he knows—
So slim, so graceful, and so tall—
Their pride—a puzzle to them all.

Now see him in another place,
A broad smile beaming on his face;
Can easily write—but will dictate,
And journalists in patience wait
To publish news of more import
Than peace or war, or strike or sport.
It's not his own biography
He wishes now to do and die;
He leaves to Pundit and the Sage
To humour youth or passing age—
The pastime of a puerile page.
His is a mission more divine,
To rouse his people to combine;
And in English language free and fine,
A statement of his public views,

In broadest headlines in the news,
To publish from all colleges,
And schools and halls and palaces,
With reasons and with arguments,
And purposes and precedents—
Explaining how the land entire
Should governed be to his desire.

When he repeats his argument,
He's at his best—to circumvent
All opposition by his skill
Of phrase or fancy as he will.

“Democracy is but a name—
'Tis power that matters all the same,”
Says HANJI MANJI. “In a state
You rule but as the laws dictate,
And laws are made by men who take
This power to make them or unmake;
And if by people whom you choose,
They've power to use it or abuse.
Helpless is a minority,
And must for ever hopeless be.
Such is the case with Mussalmans:

They cannot have the slightest chance
Against the Hindus in one state;
And so from them must separate.
They never were a single nation,
Nor will in many a generation,
On any modest calculation.
You cannot by a stroke of pen
Create a race of common men;
So if they in one state unite,
The Muslims lose their very right
To live in honour as they will.
To me 'tis clear as daylight still—
An indisputable principle.
So for our peace we must divide
The land in two or three:—'Tis wide
Enough for all. The North and West
And East let Muslims take; the best
To Hindus in the South we give—
And Centre—so in peace we live.

“This is, I think, a fair solution;
Or else a mighty revolution
Will shake us, heaping ill on ill:
Take it or leave it as you will.

“And we will call it Pakistan—
Where Muslims live—a land of Dawn—
A Poet’s dream of heaven on earth—
Our native home—our nearest, dearest
place of birth.”

Thus said he, and then paused awhile,
And listened for applause; a smile
Played on his lips; his eyes were bright;
He knew his power—his cause was right.

Then WORTHAL cried with joy and pride—
“Let us divide, let us divide!”

But ALEXANDER looked around,
And alternately smiled and frowned;
And TRUMAN whispered half aside—
“You know the people: Will this do?”
The other cautiously replied—
“What he has said, I think, is true;
But ’twas not meant for me or you.”

This WORTHAL was a mighty man,
And blood of nobles in him ran;
Of fine physique, and strong and tall;
Could speak in any house or hall;

Nor feared his purpose to unfold
In calm debate or counsel bold;
With accent clear and quiet tone
And ease, incision all his own;
And still a pleasant smile he wore:
He knew his mind and cared no more.

SIR ALEXANDER was a Knight—

A graceful form of guileless power;
Could fly in air, on land could fight,
As was the need each passing hour.

And yet he was a man of peace;
Would make no war, but on disease,
Or with the enemies abroad,
Of his great country, King, and God.

And of his name-sake he had heard,
Who left the land of far-off Greece,
His fame and glory to increase—

As by historians is averred;
And came to the land of Punjab fair,
Its golden fields, so rich and rare,
And flowing rivers everywhere;
But went away, nor left a trace
To mark the triumph of his race.

THE FIRST SHOT

Such was the land of Punjab then,
And such today its martial men—
So thought SIR ALEXANDER when
He took his paper and his pen,
To call them to the field again,
Or welcome home from battle plain;
And he was of this justly proud,
And would declare it even aloud,
Although he was a modest man,
And spoke but little and to plan;
And he will leave behind a name,
As one who sought nor praise nor blame,
But gained his purpose all the same.

And TRUMAN hailed from great Bengal,
Where tigers roam, as we are told;
But he was not so fierce at all:
His speech was short, but stout and bol
And he was quick to make reply,
And brooked nor cant nor casuistry;
Had planned to rise, was proud to rule,
And yet to fall was not afraid;
Had seen of life the sternest school—
The promise high, the hope delayed,

And change of fortune, light and shade:
And so was TRUMAN stoutly made.

HANJI MANJI for a while
Listened with a beaming smile;
There was a shuffle, then a pause—
A silence following applause,
That chilleth you with never a cause;
And then a little murmur rose,
Like rustling wind that no one knows—

Indeed, you call it Pakistan—

The land of purest light;

But know it is your Bakistan—

The land of fear and fright;

And soon will change to Khakistan—

The land of dust and blight.

II

THE PASSING OF TRUMAN

“THE Lion is the king of beasts,”
Said HANJI MANJI; “but he feasts
On what he slays, not what he saves;
But man is different, and he craves
Both for the things of earth and heaven.
He sees and smells, and it is given
To him to think and understand;
To will, to fashion and command;
And so he makes his joy and sorrow;
And builds his yesterday, today and his
tomorrow.”

So said he and awhile did pause,
And waited for his old applause;
But when he saw them silent still,
He gazed from side to side, and waved
his monocle.

“All this indeed is very well,”
Said MR. TRUMAN; “but pray tell,
What has this to do with all
The problems that for answer call?”

“Ah, MR. TRUMAN, you by now
Should know what it is anyhow,”
Said HANJI MANJI. “In the east
The sun doth rise—and that at least
You know, for there you love to lie,
While we gaze at the western sky.
But there are some who will not learn
Although you spell each word and turn
The simple meaning inside out;
They will not hear, although you shout;
And yet they know their interest still.”
He paused and fixed his monocle:
“They play the game of seek and hide,
And on their little broom-stick ride
To wealth, to patronage, to power;
And change with every changing hour.
They are the enemies within
The camp, and make a deal of din,
And care not if their brethren lose or win.”

At this into a fit of rage
Flew TRUMAN, and not even the age
Of HANJI MANJI did he spare.
“Do you refer to me? How dare

You say this ? But I do not care,
And will repeat it anywhere—
A man who speaks as you have done,
Is not I call a gentleman !”

“Withdraw, withdraw, for shame, for shame
It is an insult to the Chair,”
Said ALEXANDER. “’Tis the same
To me,” said HANJI MANJI with a down-
cast air.

And then he paused a moment still,
And re-arranged his monocle:
“I do not, gentlemen, desire
To rouse to flame the smouldering fire
That burns within your hearts today;
But venture only this to say,
You’ve honoured me as President
Of your great Council, and I’ve spent
Some time, and, may be, something more,
To serve your cause. It is a score
Of years or more since I have been
Your servant and, believe me, seen
Of life what I should like to spare
You all, my friends. But in this Chair

Which you have honoured me to fill,
I have not heard such language till
This moment—and it is the last.
'Tis not in anger—that is past—
That I speak now: but I must say,
How bad, how sad I feel today,
To think of all the deep disgrace
Showered upon me in this place.
So, gentlemen, 'tis my desire,
That you allow me to retire.
It cannot be the same again
Within this meeting place of pain."
Thus ended, and in silence still
He re-arranged his monocle.

There was a little pause, and then
A heavy surge of sounds, as when
Sharp mountain torrents rush and roll
Into the vale beneath, beyond control.
"TRUMAN, withdraw" — "for shame, for
shame;"
"Let him retire, it is a game;"
"We cannot be indeed the same;"
"TRUMAN, withdraw—for shame, for shame!"

And many more in many a sound,
Came rushing round, in bound on bound,
To cause confusion and confound.

And then above the tumult rose
One, who with looks of calm repose
Surveyed the scene: and silence filled
The hall and every note was stilled.
His name was MR. WORTHAL and
He spoke in tone of quick command:
"I 'm sure, the house is all agreed
We must respect the Chair. Indeed,
It is a matter of regret,
That any one should so forget
Himself, as TRUMAN did today.
And only this I need to say,
He owes it to himself and all
Assembled in this ancient hall,
To stand up and apologise
Without reserve in any guise.
Should he refuse, I shall propose
He be expelled." Up TRUMAN rose
As one by arrow stung, and cried—
"Away with all your sophistry.

I know what you so long have tried,
And gladly and without a sigh
Give you what keenly you desire,
And from your midst e'en now retire."

And saying so, he left the hall;
And silence fell upon them all.
But HANJI MANJI with a smile
Played with his monocle awhile.

III

THE AGREEMENT WITH ALEXANDER

“THIS TRUMAN was a thorn indeed,”
Said HANJI MANJI; “and he’s out.
Now let us calmly sit and read
The signs of times, and cast about
To see how best we may improve
Our lot, and from our path remove
The dangers that before us lie.
We wish to live—and not to die—
In freedom, honour; but the world
Is all ablaze—great armies hurled
In millions on the battle-field,
Where none gives quarter, none will yield;
And everywhere from near and far
Rumbles the thunder cloud of war;
On earth, at sea, and in the air
This lightning flashes everywhere;
Nor is there yet the end in sight;
For nations bitterly will fight
For freedom and for honour’s sake—
But most when their own life’s at stake—

As it is now, So let us see
Whatever the end of this may be."

"The Allies, I think, have untold power,
In money, armaments, and men;
There may be losses—but the hour
Is theirs when it should strike again,"
Said ALEXANDER.

"I agree,"

Said HANJI MANJI hastily;
"And this I do, however it be,
As much for theirs as for our sake.
Who knows what horrors would o'ertake
This land if they should chance to lose.
It's easy but to read the news
Of battles lost and battles won,
And marches ended or begun;
But what the lot of men must be
We can't imagine easily.
And so I wish the Allies success
For their own sake—for ours no less.
But who can tell—for who can know
The ups and downs of life below;
And what the end of this may be
We cannot say quite easily."

"I do not understand you now,"
Said ALEXANDER ; "anyhow,
I know my mind, and know the way
Our interest lies, and what will pay ;
And that's enough from day to day."

"It's of our interest that I speak,"
Said HANJI MANJI ; "and I seek
To clear the doubts within my mind—
As from experience I do find
That I am often not alone
In all the hopes and fears I own.
Now let us see : Here is this war,
And let us now assume we are
Unable to forecast its end :
What follows ? Now, can we depend,
Besides ourselves, on any one ?

Look at our fate—how in the past
How all of us have been undone
Because our fortunes were then cast
With others in a single boat,
To sail with them, or sink or float.
Look at the last one hundred years :
Our history is a page of tears,

Defeat, decay, and poverty,
And all the ills of life that be;
And no one to our rescue came;
And even now it is the same;
'Tis less than thirty years ago,
 We made a pact at Lucknow then,
 And trusted many gentlemen,
Who posed as friends, but were not so;
And then it took a score of years
To wipe out that new tale of tears.
Think of the last few years again—
A story of more poignant pain;
For we are poor and we are weak,
And cannot cry—not even speak;
And our good friends, who claim to be
Our guides and talk philosophy,
Deny to us our rightful place,
To keep with them an even pace.
And so on whom, I ask again,
Can we depend? Alas, in vain
Have I sought comfort in the past—
This ancient country and so vast,
Our common ties of blood and race,
 And common friendship, common aim,

And thought of what is yet the same
In speech, in language, in each face:
But I have felt like one who dwells alone
Upon a lonely vision that is gone!"

He paused awhile as if in pain;
Perchance a tear was in his eye—
Perchance he heaved a little sigh—
Then wiped his brow and spoke again:

"We are in this uncertainty,
And none can tell us what may be;
And none on whom we can depend,
Save our own selves, with God to friend;
And I think, in such circumstance,
Our problem is—whatever chance—

We should not sink; and what is more—
Take care to see that we advance

A little further than before.
Whoever wins must find a place
For us in honour, not disgrace.
That is the problem, as I see :
How can we solve it quietly ?"

"I never thought of it before,"
Said MR. WORTHAL; "but the more

I think, the more to me is clear,
It calls for quick decision here."

"I do not know what this may be,"
Said ALEXANDER; "seems to me,
'Tis an imaginary fear,
And cases of this kind appear
To frighten more the more we fear.
This war can only have one end—
With men to fight and God to friend.
But you have something in your mind;
So tell us, and if we can find
The means your trouble to allay,
We'll gladly do the best we may."

Encouraged by this friendly speech,
He spoke again: "I know how each
Of you is kind; and you know I
But think of our community.
My life has been a lonely fight—
With only God to help the right.
Now this is what I understand:
There are three parties in the land;
The British power that rules, and we

The Muslims and the Hindus—three.
 The British are at war; and they
 Who fight so grimly day by day,
 Grow hardened both in mind and heart,
 And do not yield, or freely part
 With what they have; and here they are
 Fighting a fierce and deadly war.
 Now Hindus and the Muslims seek
 Freedom, and yet they both are weak;
 And cannot, e'en if all combined,
 Wrench it by force : 'tis Fate unkind
 Has put us in this sorry state.
 The Hindus say they cannot wait, '
 And so have issued their command,
 And bid the British quit the land:
 Now Politics' a tangled game—
 With many moves—a single aim—
 The same, yet never all the same :
 A thing of change, with changing laws, '
 Of changing minds and changing men—
 A science of the How and When,
 In Time and Place, Effect and Cause.
 It's not a pure Philosophy
 Of truths eternal that may be;

Of reason or of argument
Of right or wrong that we present,
So that when Freedom's name we call,
It falls to us—"for all, by all!"
But when Mahatmas guide the land,
And Saints and Pundits take command,
They issue orders—"Hie thee hence!"—
And do not care for commonsense."
He paused awhile, as if in pain;
Then spoke with all his strength again;
"Now for the British at this time
To quit the land would be a crime
Against this country and their own:
For who will come when they are gone?
Disaster and defeat will trace
Their path and stare them in the face;
The Hindus want immediate power,
And think it is their fateful hour;
But I believe that History
Is not so simple as this all;
Nor this the way to make us free—
That we together rise or fall.
We cannot, so it seems to me,
In this at one with Hindus be.

But then for Freedom is their cry,
And Freedom is a precious thing;
And in the name of Freedom die
Millions of men and many a king.
So if from them we need to part,
We yet have freedom in our heart.
That is our goal, or near or far;
And when at last this bloody war
Will end, our fervent prayer will be
That it may bring us liberty,
And all this country may be free.

“But should there be a chance of war—
And we all know what chances are—
If then our lonely boat should sink—
And it is this that makes me think :
There was a time in olden days
When sire and son went different ways,
And one would fight and one befriend
The common foe, so in the end
Safe lay the family property:
And yet there is another course,
Which seems to me hath greater force
And is from danger much more free:

Here's an open triangle—with each line
Apart, though tending to incline,
And fain would meet : and at the base
The line of British power we trace;
And then we see how they divide,
Hindus and Muslims, on each side.
We know not who would meet or part;
They seem to pause and then to start,
And think it's all a clever art.
I think we must not always meet,
If we are cautious and discreet;
And that's, I think, our safest way.
There was a Poet in our day,
Who told us of his Pakistan—
His holy land, his dream of dawn;
And I have wondered how 'twould be
If we should take him seriously.
And that would be our sacred land,
Where we could live in peace—a band
Of pious pilgrims on this earth—
Our happy home, our place of birth.
It needs must be a sovereign state—
Free and a master of its fate.
To this the Hindus can't agree,

Nor yet the British, as I see;
 And so we have an argument,
 From both of them apart to stand;
 And with good reason to dissent,
 And save our face or show our hand."

"I do not understand at all,"
 Cried ALEXANDER, "what you mean.
 You know a spade a spade I call,
 And not a tool whereon to lean;
 So tell me plain what you intend."

"I do but partly guess the trend,"
 Said MR. WORTHAM, "of your speech:
 'Tis each for all, and all for each;
 Divide or else to re-unite,
 And so on different fronts to fight:
 But tell us plainly what you mean,
 That we may see what you have seen."

"If we to Pakistan should hold,"
 Said HANJI MANJI, "as our old
 And ancient land, 'twill be a charm
 To keep us safe and free from harm.
 We sail not in the Hindu boat,
 But with the British keep afloat;

And yet have our own vessel too—
Not for us all—but only few—
A gallant and experienced crew,
Who are not afraid to die,
With face uplifted to the sky.
And so whatever be the gale,
We do not sink, we do not fail.
In plainer language, this I mean—
We look around and in between;
And if the British win this war,
We win with them—with them we are;
But in another circumstance,
We do not meet with dire mischance,
Because this small and gallant crew
Will keep afloat and succour you.
This is our issue—Pakistan!
If they agree—we help them on
In their war-effort—one and all;
But if they do not—we shall call
A halt—not hinder—let them go
Without the few that tell them so.
And they, no doubt, should there be need.
Would help us all, and so succeed.
So each for all and all for each,

THE AGREEMENT WITH ALEXANDER

Our shore in safety we shall reach.
Thus ALEXANDER will be free
To give the best he can, and be
The favourite; only Pakistan
Is what we've all agreed upon;
And even if we publicly
Denounce his actions, he will know
What we intend to friend or foe;
Only he holds that Pakistan's
The cry of all the Mussalmans.
We do not what it is define,
Nor measure it by length of line;
It is the darling of our soul—
The gift of God, our sacred goal;
The more difficult it should seem,
The more is it our daily dream—
The vision of our heart, our hope supreme

Thus ended he—a subtle smile
Played on his lips, as for a while
He watched the effect of what had said
Then MR. WORTHAL raised his head,
And thus in measured tones began:
“A Poet is a holy man;

And when he dreamt of Pakistan,
Who could have thought it was the dawn
Of hope for every Mussalman ?
But now I see what you intend.
You are my master, and I bend
My knee to you—the greatest friend
Of independent Hindustan!
And every Hindu, Mussalman,
Should honour you as I do now:
You are our Hadi, I avow,
A man of God, a trusted guide,
With vision broad, experience wide;
And I propose we follow still
Your present plan. Lead where you will:
One law, one leader, and one goal—
To keep us safe, to keep us whole.”

“I do not know what you two mean,
Or whatever else may lie between,”
Said ALEXANDER; “but if you
Let me alone in what I do,
Assure me you won’t interfere
In anything within my sphere,
I will not meddle with your plan,

And stand by you in Pakistan,
Or what you will from day to day:
And that is all I have to say.”

“I think we may be satisfied,”
Said MR. WORTHAL. “He has tried
To meet us more than half way, and
We all completely understand
Each other’s place and point of view.
He is the loyal man and true,
Trusted in thought and word and deed:
In his success we all succeed.
Let him produce his million men—
Money, material — and “Amen”
We say to whate’er he may do;
But not so all: and I and you,
And others—some, but not too few,
A somewhat different tale will tell,
And bear the odium just as well.
It is a serious thing to do,
And many will not understand,
And throw the blame upon us two—
And say we’ll ruin all the land:
But then we know, and do not care;
’Tis not for long mud-plaster sticks;

And they will know in times more fair—
This is the law of politics.”

“Well done,” said HANJI MANJI—“yet
Remind me lest we should forget.”
Then slowly, “Help me if you can;
We’ll make of it a perfect plan.”

In that small group of men of state
Was one who all the while had sate
Silent, and now he raised his eyes;
And they looked at him with surprise.
He was an honest man of God,
Who yet had known the ways of men;
His mind was keen, his vision broad,
His judgement sound, though slow his pen;
A dauntless heart, a soul sincere,
Beloved of friend and many a foe;
He knew not what it was to fear;
Had died to help the poor and low.
Was strong, yet humble; kind, but brave;
Was sometimes glad—more often grave.
He came from where the Indus flows,
And rushing down in tumult goes—
A mighty wave—into the sea:

The land where first the Muslims came
To trade, and then with fire and flame
Of war, with conquest for their aim—

Then settled down more peacefully.
Hindus and Muslims then combined
The common links of life to find;
And so evolved a newer creed
Of brothers bound by thought and deed,
And common love of God and man—
Of pious life a simple plan.
Their saints and Sufis yet survive,
And keep that fellowship alive.

It was from there this GODMAN came;
Hindus and Muslims 'twas his aim

To treat as one and reconcile;
There HANJI MANJI too was born,
But left the land in utter scorn,
To mount in Bombay's beauteous isle
To wealth, to honour, and renown;
And rising with a pleasant smile,
Upon the sea and lawns look down,

And this was MR. GODMAN; he
Rose in his seat, and quietly

In clear and simple accents said—
“This is a game, but can be played
By us, as well against us too;
And, may be, we shall live to rue
The day that we adopt this plan
Of what you call your Pakistan.
I read the story of the Bat—

Would be a bird, and then a beast:

And so they drove him from their feast—
When they at peace together sat:
And I will say no more than that.”

“You haven’t read anything at all,”
Cried HANJI MANJI. “In this hall
I thought we were of a single mind,
And so should be; but now I find
A stranger echo in the air.

But I forget: it is not fair:

I think you aren’t a member yet:

I thought we had a place to fill:

May be, we are of one mind still:
Forgive me, Sir, for I forget.”

“If you desire I leave the hall,”

Said MR. GODMAN, “I regret

I came to trouble you, and yet
There's nothing that I would recall"
And saying so, he left the place,
With ne'er a frown upon his face.

"This thing is serious, I'm afraid,"

Cried ALEXANDER. "If you drive
Out of your ranks the men can aid

Your course and cause, how can it thrive?
Gone is that TRUMAN from the east;
From west this GODMAN's not the least;
Up in the north there is that KHAN
Who cares not for your Pakistan.
It seems that I alone remain
To nurse your schemes: it's all in vain."

"You do not know your strength, my friend,"

Said HANJI MANJI, "In the end
It's you alone that will succeed.

This GODMAN is a boy indeed
In politics: I know him well;
He lacks experience, nor can spell
A word of modern history.

Let him alone. If we have you,
That's all we want—that's all to do"

"I keep my word, whate'er it be,"
Said ALEXANDER cheerily.

"That is enough, and thank you, dear,"
Said HANJI MANJI. "I've no fear
About the beginning or the end—
With men to fight and God to friend."

IV

CONFABULATIONS

"COME, WORTHAL, come more near to me,"

Said HANJI MANJI. "I have news
For you. Come nearer still, and see

This precious document—the views
Of one who calls himself a PRINCE;
There's something in a name, and since
It pleases him, we will not pain:
Let him be honoured by his men.
He takes us seriously, and wakes
Out of his slumber, and then makes
Proposals, wants to know our plan
About our state of Pakistan.

He takes the map and draws the line;
Seeks to distinguish and define;
The methods and the means recites
Of states and peoples and their rights;
Of plebiscite and privilege,
And what else we may pawn or pledge
To satisfy him if we can,

About our scheme of Pakistan.
It makes me smile to think of this:
Isn't it funny—all that is?"

"This is a serious thing, I fear,"
Said MR. WORTHAL, "and I hear
They wish to have a talk with you;
The great MAHATMA wants it too;
I do not know their true intent:
They say he's good at argument."

"I've played at law for forty years,"
Said HANJI MANJI; "have no fears.
A written or a spoken word
Is like a double edged sword,
And you can turn it as you will—
To save or slay, to cure or kill.
An argument is but a snare
To trap and take you unaware;
If weak your case and cannot hold,
Be strong to speak, in action bold.
Half truths repeated gather force
As they go onward in their course;
And so like truth will often tell,
You will believe them just as well.
And when your reasons are not sound,

Confuse the issues to confound
The sense with more or less of sound,
As suits your purpose day by day:
All people at all times you may
Thus bring under your quiet sway;
For they will change, and so will you,
Nor know what's half, what's wholly true.
'Tis like the current of a stream,
The same, yet not the same, we deem;
But we can always keep afloat
In course of wind and wave we note;
And have the people with us still,
To follow us where'er we will.

"It is a common principle
Of law, that he whom you accuse,
May only answer as he will,
And you must prove your case or lose.
And so we hold to Pakistan:
Let the opponent state his case,
And we will break him to the base—
Whatever he may lean upon.
What he concedes we will reject,
His statements carefully dissect,
Connect at will or disconnect.

If he desire we should divide,
We'll block the way from every side;
And that is how he cannot gain
His point, howe'er he strive or strain."

"You are indeed most wonderful,"
Said MR. WORTHAL; "you can pull
To pieces anything you please.
But still our troubles will increase.
I do not know what they will say—
The Press, the people—day by day."

"I do not care, whate'er they say,"
Said HANJI MANJI, "if I may
But trip them up in argument:
And e'en if it be their intent
To give whatever we demand,
We'll shift the ground, and take our stand
On something else. If they concede
The whole of Pakistan indeed,
We'll ask for corridor between
The north and east and west; and e'en
This may not satisfy our claim,
Which will never be the same:
For if by chance they should agree,

We will demand a guarantee
That no one may undo again
Our settlement, and make it plain
That leaders of the Hindus all,
And others as we need to call,
Must promise to support the same.
They talk of peoples' rights, and aim
But to divide us in each state:
We will deny this, and debate
That it's our right to live as free
And powerful people as they be.

"We will insist that we alone
Select the men we call our own;
And none is a true Mussalman
Except the one we fix upon.
And if to this they should agree,
We will demand that there should be
In Hindu states no common laws
Save what we should approve, because
We fear the tyranny of the strong,
And will not suffer any wrong.
Self-government, democracy,
Are only names except there be
Not numbers, but equality.

Nay more, because the rich have power,
And numbers add to it each hour—
The poor and few have all the more
Need for protection on that score.

The first must be the last, and those

Who were the last now first must be;

That is the law of liberty—

And that alone can end our woes.

And so we'll break ere we begin,

And whatever chance they cannot win.

“If they give in, we'll ask for more,

Nor yield the ground we gained before.

The more they seek, the more we'll strive

To stand apart—to keep alive,

And, may be, even so to thrive.

And even if we make a pact,

We yet will leave an open door

To 'scape, or ask for something more,

Before we ratify the act.

“A man can give but what he has;

And we have precious little, as

There's nothing in our land our own:

It is a foreign power alone

Can give us what it's pleased to grant.
But even if they change, we shan't—
A while, of course—and so it will
Appear we do't on principle.
And this will break our enemies,
And also help us to increase,
For what is ours, our rightful claim.
To them it will be just the same—
Only a little change of name—
A Hindu or a Mussalman:
But for us the day is won.

“They would not wish us to unite,
I think; 'twould make them look so small,
Before the world—in public sight—
And that's not little after all.
For they've said if we all agree—
The Hindus and the Mussalmans—
They will not hinder our advance,
And give us all to make us free.
But now if this agreement fail—
And we can wreck it if we will—
They bear no odium of this ill,
Nor yet we in this tangled tale.

And so we stick to Pakistan—
Our dream of day, our light of dawn:
And now you know how this will end:
So do not worry, my good friend.”

“You are indeed most wonderful,”
Said MR. WORTHAL; “you can pull
To pieces any argument.
But whate’er be their true intent,
You know that we should lose the game,
If we succeed in what we claim.
If they agree, and we decide
To live with them, or else divide,
’Twill break the bond that holds us now;
You know our friends—how they avow
And end at will their loyalties;
How they can flame, and how they freeze;
When we have nought to give or gain,
Together all they may remain;
But when there’s something to divide,
And any claim by chance denied,
They all will break, or turn aside,
And each apart his course will guide.

“We hold we are two nations still—

Hindus and Mussalmans—nor will
Together live on principle:
Yet we want Hindus in our state
To be with us, not separate.
That is the weakness of our case,
And that is what we have to face:
But you know how to re-arrange
Your line of argument or change."

"I understand what troubles you,"
Said HANJI MANJI; "nor is new
This simple line of thought to me.
I know our friends and what they be;
Logic and life will not agree;
And I can easily meet the case,
And Pundits and Mahatmas face.
I know with whom I have to deal:
They try my patience, and I feel
Weary at heart. They all do know
Our ways apart at present go,
And this I have so often said;
And yet they give me a sick-head,
And with their endless talks pursue—
Repeating oft the old, the new,

And every other argument
They are so eager to invent

“It is a weary tale to tell;
You do not know them quite so well:
This man’s indeed the rarest bird
That ever sang or said a word;
They call him a MAHATMA still;
But he can be whate’er he will,
And all on a good principle
Of Truth, non-violence, and love,
And God who guides him from above.
He also has his inner voice,
Which bids this little world rejoice
At what it whispers secretly.
He fasts if you should disagree,
And then you know not where you be;
For if he dies, ’tis on your soul;
And if he lives, he hits the goal;
And so in either case he wins,
And leaves us groaning with our sins.
I’ve sometimes thought I too should fast;
Only I have a little taste,

And do not wish good food to waste,
Which anyhow not long will last.

“That PRINCELING is a queerer fish;
A Pleader—yet with what a notion
Of his own powers! How I wish

He lay at the bottom of the ocean.
And he can turn and twist a word
With meanings you have never heard,
And then bring out his formulas;
Divide, dissect them clause by clause,
And ask you if you would agree,
Or state your case whate’er it be.
He has precision—which I hate:
I would not, howsoever late,
Have him at dinner or debate.
He is too clever, ay, by half;
Only he sometimes makes me laugh.
He does not lack intelligence—
Only a little commonsense.
He is the man behind the throne;
Mahatmas do not rule alone.
Thank Goodness, ’tis not he would come

To beard me in my very home.
Mahatmas are a different breed;
They leave you when they cannot lead.
So let him come whene'er he please:
And now sit down and dine at ease."

V

THE LOST BATTLE

'You are my brother—let me plead
With you for kindly charity:
The past is past—let dead things be;
Now let's be friends again indeed,
As once we were—both you and I.¹
And all the people in the land—
They are but waiting for the hand
Of love, to let the by-gones by.
If we have sinned, let us forget;
For we have suffered, and the tears
Have marred the fellowship of years,
And are not dry within us yet.
We have a common heritage;
A common aim— a common end:
Let us unite, my valiant friend,
And write a newer, nobler page
In history of this fallen land;
And strive we in this fateful hour
To break the bonds of foreign power-
The inhuman clasp of iron hand.

And if we two should be agreed
To act as one in common need,
I promise whatever influence
I may possess in any sense,
Will all be at your own command;
And you may freely then demand
Of me and all who are with me,
To follow you to make us free.
You know I do not represent
Any opinion but my own;
And yet I do not stand alone,
When I am on a mission bent.
And this will be my object still—
The purpose of my life and will—
To follow you in unity,
Again to make our country free.
And then if you should still decide
In parts this country to divide,
We yet should live in it as friends,
With common needs and common ends;
Together still, though set apart—
United in the mind and heart.”
He ceased: a tear was in his eye;

He paused a moment for reply.

He was a man of mighty soul—

A simple heart of love and truth;

Gentle and sweet, and full of ruth,

And had his mind in calm control.

His faith was great in God on high,

And man below as wholly good;

And felt we had not understood

The laws of life, and so did sigh.

His love had power to conquer hate;

His meekness, pride—and hope, despair,

By meditation, fast, and prayer,

And patience long to watch and wait.

He was a man of perfect peace:

To save himself he would not slay;

And saw through night a brighter day,

Through death of life a newer lease.

Yet he was filled with pain to see

A social sore or human wrong;

And would not suffer it for long,

And sought to make the whole world free

Through silent suffering and the might

Of love to quench the flames of war—

Destroying all from near and far,
With famine, pestilence, and blight.
He looked so frail, so slight, so small,
Yet high his mission, great his goal;
Was called MAHATMA—mighty soul—
Honoured by each, beloved of all.
But now a tear was in his eye;
He paused a moment for reply.

But HANJI MANJI was unmoved;
He faintly smiled, and had no fear
Of glowing tongue or glistening tear:
All sentiment he disapproved.

“It is a pity,” he went on,
“You speak but for yourself alone,
And no one in this represent.
How can there be a settlement?

For I am bound to those who made
Me of their Council President.

I speak for them and all arrayed
Under the flag we carry on—
I mean each grown up Mussalman.
And yet because I hold you dear,
And honour you, nay more, revere

As man to man I'll speak to you;
Or let us talk, as is our due,
As a Hindu and a Muslim true;
And I'll endeavour to convince
You, as I've done so many a Prince,
And many a man of high estate;
And 'tis my faith that soon or late,
You also will believe with me
This is the way to make us free.

"I'll tell you why is Pakistan
The creed of every Mussalman.
Now let us take historic view
Of what is past—the old, the new:
You know we were a mighty nation,
 And ruled the land from end to end;
 Nay start not—have some patience, friend
And then were ousted from this station'
When came the British to this land.
For years we lay under the hand
Of iron Fate, and no one cared'
How we declined, how we despaired;
The Hindus rose upon our fall—
I'll say no more—'twill hurt you all.

They often talk as if they were
Changed into something sweet and fair.
There is, I think, a simple test
Of all professions at their best:
Good government's no substitute
For ours, we say without dispute:
Now, will your Hindus deem the worst
Of Muslim rule as less accursed
Than foreign yoke? How they will start
At this and wonder in their heart!
So let us lead our lives apart.
We have discovered now at length,
We yet possess some little strength,
And so are waiting for the hour
Will crown us yet again with power.
Of this our symbol's Pakistan:
A Poet had a dream of dawn—
A vision of a land afar—
The rising Crescent and the Star;
And we believe the day is come
Will see us 'stablished in our home.
And so we want a sovereign state
To guide the fortunes of our fate,
Within this country, and yet drawn

Apart as our own Pakistan,
As yours will be your Hindustan.

“You Hindus are a nation too;
We don’t deny what is your due;
And yet we are from each apart
In manners, modes of thought, and art,
Religion, language, and in laws,
Our codes of censure and applause.
We’re different in our food and dress,
Our speech and holidays no less.
We have a different calendar;
There are but few things which occur
To me we hold in common still—
A common bondage, if you will—
And common taxes and decrees
Of foreign power to make us freeze,
Issued by them but as they please!

“I am for independence still,
And hold to it on principle—
For Pakistan and Hindustan.
That is the only light upon
This land that I can faintly see,
To lead us to our liberty.

And if you but make common cause
With me, and with your comrades strive,
I doubt not, as we are alive,
We'll free this land from foreign claws.
If not, we will but die as slaves,
And lie unhonoured in our graves."

"How can I," the MAHATMA said,
"Agree to this? You speak as though
There were from ages long ago,
Two people in two camps arrayed.
We all have sinned alike and each
Has suffered, and I can't deny
There have been lapses verily
In thought and action, and in speech.
But we're all children of one land,
And only 'tis in recent years
Have learnt the language of our fears—
Instructed by a master hand.
We have a common ancestry,
However far apart we roam;
Though many a different name there be,
We have a common heart and home.
I can't agree on principle

To your two nations, if you will;
But am, if you should so decide,
Prepared our country to divide,
As brothers who may live apart—
Without a break in home or heart.
But we can only represent

 The people's will, and they must say,
 In voice as clear as light of day,
What is indeed their true intent.
So there must be a plebiscite,
And to their will we shall submit.
I must insist upon this too,
That where non-Muslims are not few,
In provinces assigned to you,
Who do not want this Pakistan,
They may be part of Hindustan."

"These are new points which you now raise,"
Said HANJI MANJI. "I could phrase
My own requirements wider still;
But I refrain on principle.
You cannot talk of plebiscite
To which we needs must all submit.
You did not say you were not able,

Without it, matters to decide,
When years ago at the Round Table,
Discussed we questions quite as wide.
You will forgive me if I fear
There is some other motive now,
Than on the surface does appear,
Behind this new thing you avow.
Quite possibly—nay, by your leave,
You think that with your wealth and power,
Your propaganda can deceive
The people in that fateful hour,
And win the poor weak Mussalmans
To sell away their only chance.
I can't at all to this agree,
And sign away our liberty.
As for the other thing you said,
I wonder why it was delayed
So long, and now I have no doubt
Its plan and purpose all about;
For it can only mutilate
And weaken every single state;
So that our dream of sovereignty,
Deep in the dust should buried be,
And Pakistan, a sightless dream,

A snare or nightmare we should deem.
Forgive me, but I thought that you
At least would give us justice due.
For me e'en freedom's grace is gone
Without a powerful Pakistan."

"I do not understand you now,"
Said the MAHATMA; "I had thought
We had agreed that there was not
The slightest chance, you will allow,
For Pakistan, if liberty
Did not precede it; and, when free,
We could arrange your Pakistan
In strict accordance with our plan;
But if the foreign power remain,
I do not know if we can gain,
Even the dream of our desire;
And I assume, if we unite,
They cannot long resist our right,
And from our country must retire.
The world cannot allow this wrong
For ever or for even long.
But if we ask for Pakistan

Before our freedom we achieve,
I cannot, trust me, even conceive
Of sovereign power on any plan.
And then, as for this plebiscite,
I know not how you deem it fit
To call in question my intent.
My mind is on one object bent —
Our mutual rivalries to end,
And be of all a common friend.
When we sat at the Table Round,
I tried to see if common ground
Between all sections could be found.
We did not think of sovereignty;
The British power was still to be;
Only the names could then be changed,
And provinces anew arranged:
But now you want a separation
Of what you call your different nation;
We do not know if they desire
To live apart, as you maintain;
A plebiscite will tell us plain
At what they aim, for what aspire.
For there are also Mussalmans—
And I think many—who, perchance,

May not see eye to eye with you."

Quickly he said, "They are but few—
Deluded creatures of command—
Who have no stake, and raise their hand,
Or echo at some one's behest—
And whose it may be, you know best.
'Tis we who represent alone
The goal of each true Mussalman."

"Your words indeed are very strange,"
Said the MAHATMA; "but you'll change
Before this dust is blown away;
And so I plead with you and pray,
And beg you look objectively
At facts of life such as they be.
I think you spoke of weakened states,
And what you said but mutilates
Your cherished scheme of Pakistan.
I do not wish to dwell upon
What it involves in principle;
You wish both ways to have your will.
You cannot at one centre trust
Hindus with Muslims: yet you must

Have them together in your place:
I do not understand your case.
If by no power of persuasion,
Hindus and Muslims be one nation,
And needs must live in separation—
And if you think they can't unite,

At Delhi in one common state,—
How can you then deny their right
In provinces to separate?

If Delhi be such an eyesore
To Hindus or to Mussalmans,
How can we, if by any chance
They wish to live from each away—
Demand that they together stay,

At your Calcutta or Lahore?
What's good for Muslims may as well
Be good for Hindus—who can tell?
And where's the harm if provinces
Be re-arranged? You asked for this
Not long ago, and had your way,
And rightly too, as I should say.
A few more will not matter now:
They'll solve the problem anyhow.
Here is a simple formula:

Take what you will, and only give
But as you take—that others live
The same as you do, by your law.”

“It may be as you say, but I,”
Said HANJI MANJI in reply,
“Must ask at first that you agree
To Pakistan, such as it be
To us, not you. How can we ask
The world to help us in our task,
If you and I cannot decide
A simple issue, and abide
By what we settle peacefully?
This is how it appears to me;
And I have nothing more to say,
And for our friendship still will pray,
And hope that when your inner voice
You hear again, it will rejoice
The heart of every one to know
That you along my path will go,
And hand in hand with me unite,
To claim our freedom as our right.”

“Alas, I have but little hope,”
Said the MAHATMA, “and I grope

For light upon this darksome way;
And unto God will only pray,
To show the path; and I believe
You, as a good man, will receive
His light and guidance, even as I.
This is my hope, that ere I die,
There will be peace within this land,
And Hindus, Muslims, hand in hand,
Will be as brothers once again,
And pass away this night of pain."

"That was indeed my early dream,"
Said HANJI MANJI, "and the gleam
Yet lingers on my passing day,
Although the goal seems far away.
But now apart we must remain;
Good-bye—perhaps we'll meet again;
Nor all our efforts be in vain."

A tear stood in the MAHATMA's eye—
"Amen!" he said, and then, "Good-bye!"

Thus endeth e'en as it began
This pretty tale of Pakistan;
For all good things must end one day,

And good-bye we must also say:
A child of war, in times of peace
Its lingering echoes now must cease.
For ended hath the blight of war,
That seared the earth from near and far;
And now a little time remains
To count our losses and our gains;
And some will laugh, and some will cry,
To see this tragi-comedy.
But if we have good humour still,
We need not suffer through ill-will.
For History's but a moving stage,
And all its men but actors are;
And Politics a pretty page
We read and wonder from afar.
So let's beguile our tears awhile,
And sweetly smile in pleasant style.

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